

The Clod-Hopper



Volume 8 digital edition 4

Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. — Raleigh, NC

April 2024

Patience, Patience, Patience

by Tom Packer, President



It is early April with some warm, early spring days. Gardeners are chomping at the bit to start planting their vegetables. Especially those of us who have been growing seedlings in our garages and greenhouses - they look ready to go!

However, my advice is “Whoa!” It’s not easy, but patience is a supreme virtue in the spring. Gardeners naturally like to spring into action once things warm up in spring. However, sometimes the best thing we can do is wait.

While some think that getting those vegetable seedlings in the ground will result in an advantage or head-start, it won’t really matter in the end if your tomatoes are planted on April 1st or April 25th. Also, while the ambient temperature during the day may feel warm, the soil also needs time to warm up. There is nothing more disappointing than discovering limp plants after an overnight freeze and having to start all over.

Here is a link to the NC Cooperative Extension’s planting calendar for Central North Carolina: <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/central-north-carolina-planting-calendar-for-annual-vegetables-fruits-and-herbs> It provides a very useful guide to timing the planting of various vegetables, fruits and herbs. However, keep in mind that it is only a guide. If the weather forecast calls for a freeze, delay planting or cover anything that already has been planted.

In April

Monthly meetings begin officially at 7:30 PM at the Ruby McSwain Education Center, JC Raulston Arboretum, on the third Tuesday of each month. Refreshments and social time start at 7:00. Visitors and prospective new members are always welcome!

Our Speaker for April is long-time GWC favorite, Brie Arthur. She is a bestselling author and distinguished horticulturist. Her focus at the GWC April presentation will be native plants. Whether you are a seasoned gardening enthusiast or just starting out, this presentation offers insights that resonate. We’ll join Brie for an engaging discussion that unravels the art of constructing a native garden right from its inception. Through immersive storytelling, Brie will walk us through the step-by-step process, from dream to reality. Uncover the secrets behind plant selection, layout, and the overarching vision that will birth a haven of tranquility and vitality. Your garden doesn’t have to be just a garden; it can be a masterpiece of native plant diversity! Prepare to be amazed by the power of native species that require minimal upkeep but deliver maximum impact. From flowering perennials to lush greenery, native plant gardens epitomize low-maintenance elegance and ecological harmony.

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Club Officers and Committees

Board members

President: Tom Packer
Vice President: Mark Boone
Secretary: Joanne Boone
Treasurer: Shay Campbell
Immediate Past President: Kathleen Thompson
At-large board members: Rob Bartos, Gail Posey, Nell Joslin, Charlie Leverett

Committee members

Activities Chair: Jim and Rita Shaloiko (seed swap), Christine Elliott and Marion Flint (refreshments), Joanne Boone (picnic), Kathleen Thompson (awards banquet)
Audit: Charles Gilliam, Mac Williamson, Reed Elliott
Azalea Sale: Charlie Leverett
Beautification Awards: TBA
Club Awards: TBA
Endowment Investment: Charles Gilliam, Mark Boone, Charlie Leverett
Friendship: Debbie Leverett
Historical: Donna Farmer
Membership: Nell Joslin
Newsletter Editor: Reed Elliott
Nominating: Jim Moore
Programs: Mark Boone
Projects: Sharon LaRusch, Lynn Swanson
Publicity: Charles Gilliam
Scholarship: Christine Elliott
Webmaster: Reed Elliott

Contact Us

For additional information email our Club at GardenersofWakeCountyNC@gmail.com

Our Club webpage is online at <https://gardenersofwakecounty.weebly.com/>

Online membership applications are at: <https://form.jotform.com/232744428653158>

Patience, Patience, Patience

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Keeping an eye on the temperature forecasts in April is key. Our club's good friend, Phil Campbell of Campbell Road Nursery, recommends as a rule of thumb to play it safe and wait until April 30 to plant summer vegetables each year. At the very least, keep an eye on the long-range weather forecast until the possibility of a freeze passes.

Here are some figures to keep in mind. The average last spring freeze date in Wake County is April 4th. The earliest last spring freeze date was March 1st in 1935 and the latest was May 9th in 1956. The last spring freeze dates in the past five years have been April 3, April 11, April 23, March 29 and March 21. Seedlings and young plants also can be damaged by frost, that is, when it is between 32° and 36°, so try to avoid planting during those periods as well. It can turn cold quickly in April so it's time all gardeners keep on their toes and have some patience.



As a final word, I'd like to add that, while they're too numerous to mention all by name, we as a Club want to thank the many members who come out to help with our annual Azalea Sale. If you have not yet signed up to work a shift, it is not too late as the Sale lasts until April 13. [Here's a direct link you can click to sign up to help at the Sale.](#)

Brie Arthur, April's GWC Presenter, Urges Us to "Go Native!"

by Mark Boone, Vice President



Our Speaker for April is long-time GWC favorite, Brie Arthur. She is a bestselling author and distinguished horticulturist. Her focus at the GWC April presentation will be native plants. Whether you are a seasoned gardening enthusiast or just starting out, this presentation offers insights that resonate. We'll join Brie for an engaging discussion that unravels the art of constructing a native garden right from its inception. Through immersive storytelling, Brie will walk

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Originating from southeastern Michigan, Brie's academic journey led her to excel in Landscape Design and Horticulture at Purdue University. As an advocate for consumer horticulture and home gardening, she authored two influential books, "The Foodscape Revolution" and "Gardening with Grains." Brie's contributions extend to the Emmy-winning PBS program, "Growing a Greener World."

Brie has a strong commitment to fostering sustainable gardening practices. She will be giving us great advice about how native plants can help sustain our gardens. With more than two decades of experience as a professional gardener and plant propagator, Brie inspires audiences around the globe. Known for her enthusiastic presentations and practical, out-of-the-box advice.

10 NATIVE PLANTS IN NORTH CAROLINA



The meeting starts at 7:30 PM at the Ruby McSwain Education Center, JC Raulston Arboretum, on Tuesday, April 16, 2024, with refreshments and social time at 7:00PM. Visitors and prospective new members are always welcome!

NC State Horticulture Club Houseplant Sale

by Tom Packer, President

The Horticulture Club at North Carolina State connects people to plants, horticultural science and their communities. It will be holding a unique houseplant sale at our next club meeting on April 16th.

The club helps its members realize their potential in the horticulture industry and is proud to count among its alumni leading lights of the field. The students have focused post-COVID on recovering membership and expanding opportunities. These efforts have been successful with 52 dues paying members, seven new volunteering events and a newly constructed greenhouse. However, the club wants to do even more. That's where the Gardeners of Wake County can help.



Over the past two semesters, students have lovingly been raising various houseplants, annuals and perennials in their new greenhouse. These plants not only are beautiful, but also help the students gain crucial experience in greenhouse management that they can use in their careers. So, when we support their upcoming fundraiser, we will not only be acquiring beautiful plants for our homes but also supporting our future nurserymen, landscapers and breeders. Our financial support will be helping the club renovate their greenhouse by replacing its broken fertilization system and also purchase supplies for their horticultural therapy program.

New Members

The Gardeners of Wake County welcomes anyone and everyone who loves gardens and gardening. This month we're happy to have added Gwen Tony Arnold of Cary and Pamela Lietz of Raleigh to our GWC family. Be sure to say "Hi and welcome" when you see them at the next meeting, at a Share and Care, Joslin Gardens or the Azalea Sale.

Our Champion Oak

by Norm LaRusch, Clubmember



My wife Sharon moved into our home in 2008. One of the main things that drew her to the house was the beautiful landscape and towering trees. There have been many changes to that landscape over the last several years, but the latest was not exactly a pleasant one.

We have enjoyed our large Red Oak tree many mornings on the back deck, coffee in hand, watching the squirrels use it as a runway to move throughout the canopies and birds call each other and fly to visit a birdfeeder. Recently we discovered a stress fracture between the co-dominant trunk, and after 3 arborists confirming our fears, we made the heartbreaking decision to have it removed. We got in touch with a local tree service, and the date was set.

We admired the majestic beauty for a few more days, pondering on what it would look like, how to evolve the area once it was removed, and what plants would now receive FULL sun.



The tree service arrived at 7:30 that morning, rolling in with several trucks, a bobcat, and a 110 ton crane. Sharon and I looked at each other, thinking... where are they putting THAT?! (Really more like... "Oh No! God, please protect our driveway, sidewalk and porch! Amen!") It was truly a work of art, watching them put the monstrosity in place and the great care they took in preserving all they could of our landscape. With a few minor casualties (if you call flattened day lilies a casualty) the crane was set, and the work began.



I'd never seen anything like it in person. I watched the crew rig each piece, methodically removing huge limbs with a childhood fascination. Days of what I wanted to be

when I grew up came to mind. A policeman, a fireman, an army man, or cowboy were some of my choices. (I actually achieved the "army man", serving for 15 years) Watching them work was like an acrobat meeting Paul Bunyan.

Nine hours and about 20 "picks" later, she was gone, leaving a 10 feet high stump and some scattered twigs on the ground. A guesstimated weight of about 25 tons was the final tally. Although the oak will be greatly missed, there is a blank canvas now present to create new life. And as gardeners, how exciting is that! Mind you... the squirrels aren't happy at ALL!



April's Other Plant Sale—Joslin Gardens

by Sharon LaRusch and Lynn Swanson, Projects co-Chairs and Nell Joslin, Membership Chair

March madness out at Joslin was anything but mad! Mostly it was just wet! This March it rained us out of our usual Joslin Gardens workday. So that brings us to April. Our next workday at Joslin Garden will have the usual work tasks along with providing support for Joslin's Earth Day 2024 Plant Sale! The workday and sale are on Saturday, April 20, 9:00 AM to noon, rain or shine. **All money raised goes to support the GWC's volunteer projects at the Garden.** If you haven't been to the Joslin Garden lately (or ever!), this is also a grand time to come and see what the hardworking GWC volunteer team has wrought!



Partial plant list: Anise (red star), *Illicium floridanum*, Arum, *Arum italicum*, Bear's Breeches, *Acanthus mollis*, Bee Balm, *Monarda didyma*, Blue Iris, *Iris x germanica*, Camellia, *Camellia japonica*, Cardinal flower, *Lobelia cardinalis*, Chinese Windmill Palm, *Trachycarpus fortunei*, Crinum, *Crinum asiaticum*, Daylily, *Hermerocallis spp.*, Iris, *Iris germanica*, Japanese roof iris, *Iris tectorum*, Lenten Rose, *Helleborus hybridus*, Peace lily (house plant), *Spathiphyllum wallisii*, Pomegranate, *Punica granatum*, Red Maple, *Acer rubrum*, Snowflakes, *Leucojum aestivum*, Sweet Flag, *Acorus gramineus* "Ogon", Virginia sweetspire, *Itea virginica*, Yew, *Taxus spp.* Plus veggies and herbs!

Mark your calendar for April 20th and we'll chat more about it at our next GWC meeting! Until then!

Need Help? Who Ya Gunna Call?

by Sharon LaRusch and Lynn Swanson, Projects co-Chairs

Garden Share&Cares are one-day (3-4 hours) workday showing some GWC love in helping thy neighbor (and/or fellow Clubmember) with a few tasks. On Share & Care workdays, an organized crew of GWC members enjoy the opportunity to lend a helping hand. Our mission here isn't to merely form a work crew but to connect with and serve a fellow member. We organize and hold these as the opportunities arise and schedules permit.

It's been a while since anyone's asked for a Share&Care helping hand. But spring is here and now might be a good time to think about getting some help for those big jobs in your garden.

Remember, if you know of anyone, GWC member or not, that could use some Share & Care help, Lynn and I are available to discuss further and answer any questions.



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Yes, Virginia, There's a GWC Azalea Sale Going On!

by Reed Elliott, Steely-eyed Editor

Charlie Leverett, the GWC's shy and retiring wallflower best known for his alternate second place runner-up finish in the 1979 Colonel Sanders Look-alike Contest, and incidentally the GWC's head azalea wrangler, reports from his lead-lined bunker in a hidden location, that in our first two days of last year's magnificent GWC annual Azalea Sale, we sold over \$30,000 worth of some of the most beautiful azaleas (standard, deciduous, Encore and Perfecto Mundo), gardenias, and rhododendrons that anyone had seen in many a long year! In fact, our entire stock of rhododendrons disappeared before the end of the first day, and all 90 of our Wolfpack Reds were sold by the end of the second! That was great, but there's a but. What about this year? Record setting Sales require some record setting support! If you're a GWC member, sign up NOW to help at this year's Azalea Sale! It supports our Club's activities such as Joslin Gardens, the Spring Picnic and December Awards Banquet, not to mention funding the annual GWC scholarships we present to hardworking and deserving NC State Horticulture majors! Bottom line, there are some big, last year's footprints to fill in 2024, and we need all hands on deck if it's going to happen! So, ask yourself this question, "Have I volunteered to help out at the Sale?" If the answer's "Not yet," there's no time like the present to [sign up to help at the sale](#). Remember, "our" Club doesn't exist without a "u" in it!



Open April 4 through April 13
Open daily 9 - 6 (except Sunday)
at the NC State Fairgrounds
Raleigh, Gate 6
off Youth Center Rd. in the Flower Show area.

- Support our Scholarship Fund for NC State horticulture students.
- Find us on Facebook.



For info contact:
gardenersofwakecounty.weebly.com

Don't Be an April Fool

by Tom Packer, President

For those needing another reason not to miss April's monthly GWC meeting – several lucky Club members will be randomly selected to take home special "connoisseur" plants which have been generously provided by the JC Raulston Arboretum to the GWC in honor of our longstanding support of the Arboretum and its mission.

The JCRA has chosen the best and rarest plants for us, many of which were propagated by their summer interns from plants growing in the Arboretum's nursery or gardens.

Want one for your garden? There's only one way to get it! Be present front and center at the GWC April monthly meeting. WHERE? At the JC Raulston Arboretum. WHEN? Tuesday, April 16th. WHAT TIME? 7:30 PM!

This will be a case where being late may be just as bad as never! The plants will go to those who are present. Don't let the one with your name on it go to someone else!



My Corner of the Garden

by Reed Elliott, Editor

If spring is here, can spring garden cleanup be far behind? Well, yes and no. I'd like to share some excellent thoughts on this subject adapted from our friends at [AP News](#) who say, "Itching to Start Spring Garden Cleanup—Not So Fast."

Professional landscapers can't logistically clear all of their clients' properties at the same time—the right time—so they start early. That's good for them but bad for our gardens.

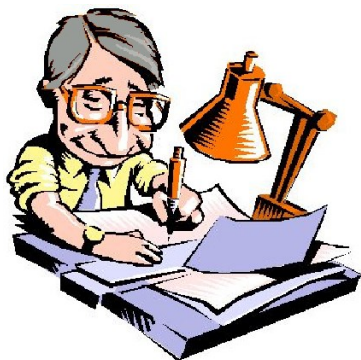
The jury is out among experts on the exact timing, but there is consensus around waiting until temperatures are consistently above 50 degrees, which is when dormant insects "wake up." Some define "consistently" as a minimum of five days. I typically wait until after seven consecutive 50-degree-plus nights have passed. Even then, it's advisable to relocate plant matter to a corner of the yard for another week or so before removing it from your property, just in case any sleepyheads hit the snooze button.

Like clockwork, premature cleaning will be followed by premature mulching. Applying mulch makes the garden look tidy, but remember that soil and plants are not furniture. They're part of a living ecosystem. Mulching before the soil has warmed sufficiently will trap in the cold and slow the reawakening of perennial, shrub and tree roots. That inhibits plant growth.

And if the soil is wet, early applications can encourage mold, mildew and fungal diseases. Mulch is an important component of a healthy garden. It retains soil moisture, suppresses weeds and helps keep soil temperatures even. But timing is crucial. Wait until it's safe to plant annuals and warm-season vegetables in your region before applying mulch. Here in Raleigh, that's no earlier than mid-April.

Likewise, resist the urge to fertilize the lawn until mid to late spring, after it has emerged from dormancy and begins active growth. Doing so earlier won't help the grass anyway. In fact, it can hurt. Lawns that are fertilized in early spring can't properly make use of those applied nutrients. They may start growing when they should be spending their energy on root development, which is what sustains turfgrasses and helps them survive summer droughts. That premature growth is often discolored and results in yellow spots in the lawn.

Excess fertilizer that can't be used by a dormant or partially dormant lawn threatens the environment and groundwater as it leaches through the soil. And since it doesn't benefit the lawn, it's also a waste of money.



Cleaning up tulips and daffodils is another exercise in patience. After any spring bulb has bloomed, its leaves continue to produce energy for the following year's show. Go ahead and remove stems if you'd like, but don't clear away foliage until it has turned yellow and withered.

Finally, something you really can do now: If you're itching to get your hands dirty, it's a good time to repot houseplants. Move them into the next-size pot — no more than 2 inches wider than their current container — and give them a dose of fertilizer as the season's longer daylengths stimulate them to resume active growth.